



JAMES

By the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, & Ireland. Do hereby shew unto all and singular Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, and their Officials: Parsons, Vicars, Curates, and to all spiritual persons: And also to all Justices of Peace, Sheriffs, Bayliffs, Constables, Churchwardens, & Headboroughes: And to all Officers of Cities, Boroughes, and Townes corporate: And to all other our Officers, Ministers, and Subjects whatsoever they be, aswell within Liberties, as without, to whom these presents shall come, greeting.

Wherby we are credibly certified by a Cert. grate under the hands of our trusty and welbelov'd Subjects Sir Fulke Grevill Knight, Chancellor of our Exchequer, Sir Thomas Leigh, Sir Edward Devereux, and Sir Thomas Holt Knights & Barons, Sir Edward Greuell, Sir Clement Fisher, Sir Clement Throgmorton, Sir Richard Verney, Sir Thomas Lucy, Sir Henry Dymocke, Sir William Somerville, Sir Thomas Beaufort, and Sir Henry Ramsford Knights, Thomas Spencer, Edward Boughton, Bartholomew Hales, John Repington, William Combe, and William Barnes Esquires, Justices of the Peace within our Counties of Warwicke & Gloucester: That upon Saturday the fifth day of July in the year of our Lord God, One Thousand Sixe Hundred and fourtine, there happened a sodaine and terrible fire within our Towne of Stratford upon Avon within our County of Warwicke. which within the space of lesse then two howres consumed & burnt fifty & fower dwelling houses, many of them being very faire houses, besides barnes, stables, & other howses of office, together also with great store of Corne, Hay, Straw, Wood, & Timber therein. Amounting in all to the value of Eight Thousand Pounds & upwards. The force of which fire was so great (the wind sitting full upon the Towne) that it dispersed into so many places thereof, wherby the whole Towne was in very great danger to have bene utterly consumed and burnt; by reason wherof, and of two severall fires happening in the said Towne within these Twenty yeares, to the losse of Twenty Thousand Pounds more, not onely our said poore Subjects who have now sustained this great losse, are utterly undone and like to perish, but also the rest of the Towne is in great hazard to be overthrowne & undone, the Inhabitants there being no waies able to relieve their distressed neighbors in this their great want & misery. And whereas the said Towne hath bene a great Market Towne wherunto great recourse of people was made, by reason of the weekly Market, faires, and other frequent meetings, which were there holden and appointed, and now being thus ruined & decayed, it is in great hazard to bee utterly overthrowne, if either the resort thither be neglected, or course of travellers diverted, which for want of speedy reparation may bee occasioned. And forasmuch as our said distressed Subjects the Inhabitants of the said Towne are very ready & willing to the uttermost of their powers to redifie & new build the sayd Towne againe, yet finding the performance thereof far beyond their ability, they have made their humble suite unto us, that we would be pleased to provide some convenient means that the said Towne may be againe redified & repayed aswell for the reliefe of the distressed people within the same, as also for the restoring and continuing of the sayd Market, and have humbly besought us to commend the same unto a laudable deed and the charitable furtherance thereof, to the benevolence of all our loving Subjects, not doubting but that all good and well-disposed Christians will for common charity and love to their Country, and the rather for our Commendation hereof, be ready with all willingness to extend their charitable reliefe towards the comfort of so many distressed people and the speedy performing of so good and charitable a worke.

Is now therefore, that we (tendering the lamentable estate and losses of our sayd distressed Inhabitants, together with the humble suit of all our foresaid Justices made unto us on their behalves) Of our especiall Grace and Princely compassion, have given & granted, and by these our Letters Patents doe give and grant unto our foresaid trusty & welbelov'd Subjects, Sir Richard Verney, Sir Henry Ramsford Knights, Bartholomew Hales Esquire, and the Bayliffe & Burgesses of the sayd Towne of Stratford upon Avon, and to their Deputie & Deputies, the bearer or bearers hereof, full power, licence and authority, to aske, gather, receive, & take the Almes & charitable benevolence of all our loving Subjects whatsoever Inhabiting within our Counties of Kent, Surrey, Suffex, Southampton, Wilkes, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, & Cornwall, with our Citie of Canterbury, Rochester, & the Cinque Ports, and in our Citie of Chichester, & Winchester, with the Isle of Wight, and Towne of Southampton, & in our Citie of Salisbury, Exeter, Brilow, Bath, & Wells, with our Towne & County of Poole in our County of Dorset: And in all other Citie, Townes Corporate, privileged places, Parishes, Villages, and in all other places whatsoever within our said Counties and not else where for & towards the new building, redifying & erecting of the said Towne of Stratford upon Avon, & the reliefe of all such our poore distressed Subjects, their Widues & Children, as have sustained losse & decay by the misfortune of the said fire.

Wherfore we will & command you, and every of you, that at such time and times as the sayd Sir Richard Verney, Sir Henry Ramsford, Bartholomew Hales, the Bayliffe & Burgesses aforeaid or any of them or their Deputie or Deputies, the bearer or bearers hereof, shall come & repaire to any your Churches, Chappels, or other places, to aske, and receive the gratuities & charitable benevolence of our said Subjects, quietly to permit & suffer them so to do, without any manner your lets, or contradictions. And you the said Parsons, Vicars, and Curates, for the better stirring up of a charitable devotion, deliberately to publish and declare the Tenor of these our Letters Patents unto our said Subjects, exhorting and persuading them to extend their liberrall contributions in so good & charitable a cause. And you the Churchwardens of every Parish where such Collection is to be made (as afore said) to collect and gather the Almes and charitable benevolence of all our loving Subjects, And what shall be by you so gathered, to endorse on the Backe-side hereof, and deliver the same to the bearer or bearers hereof, when as thereunto you shall be required. Any Statute, Lawe, Ordinance, or provision heretofore made to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding.

In Witnesse whereof, we have caused these our Letters to be made Patents for the space of One whole yeare next after the date hereof to endure. Witness our selfe at Westminster the Eleventh day of May, in the fourteenth year of our King of England, France, and Ireland, and of Scotland, the fiftie and fortieth.

God save the King.

Printed by Thomas Purfoot.

Stewards